

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCE OF POWER
BALANCE OF VIEWS



DEADLY MERCHANDISE A worker at a backyard factory in Ilocos, Ilocos, displays fireworks for the New Year's Eve big bang. **WARNING:** (Inset) Don't let this happen to you. File photo shows a boy wrapping over the remains of his hand at a government hospital in Quezon City. The boy had picked up a "dead" firecracker, which exploded in his hand. (See related story on Page A1.)

Deadly calm over Mayon

'Up to court to call GMA on alibi of Ampatuans'

By Justine D. Uy, Norman Bordadora and TJ Burgonia

MALACANANG YESTERDAY'S BLOGGED off the Ampatuan family's denial of involvement in the Nov. 23 massacre of 57 people in Maguindanao.

"These are matters subject to rules of evidence and testimony, so it's difficult for us to comment. It's up to the courts to determine the truthfulness of the claims."

UP TO COURT: A1

Vienna murder mystery: Pinay helper named

By Cynthia L. Balana

THE PHILIPPINE EMBASSY AND police authorities in Vienna, Austria, are looking into the murder of the 26-year-old woman whose body was found on Tuesday in the office of the Lebanese ambassador's residence in that country.

VIENNA: A1



SAFE GUNS Quezon City policemen at Camp Ranging show off their pistols with the barrels taped and signed to prevent indiscriminate firing during New Year's Eve.

SAFETY: A1

Business booms while waiting for big bang

By Epilaine Aguilar

Reporter Southern Luzon

LEGASPI CITY—WITH MORE THAN 75,000 visitors flocking into Albay province this month alone, there were no vacant tables at the local Taal Grill on Tuesday.

The third St. Elia, an expensive es-

tablishment that opened only this month, had just one room left on Tuesday night. Third Venice was fully booked for five days until the 20th.

Taxi drivers say they're averaging only three hours of sleep and car rental services are on round-the-clock operations.

Business is booming in Albay as

thousands of adventure-seeking tourists are drawn to the active Mayon Volcano with many even riding their bikes to get close to the spectacular flowing lava, according to provincial authorities.

Albay Gov. Joey Salas said 2,400 visitors a day had been pouring in.

BUSINESS: A1

Phivolcs: Lull 'very unusual'

By Rey M. Nolasco
Reporter Southern Luzon
and Albay Page

LEGASPI CITY—ALTHOUGH the anticipation of a major eruption is still there, resident volcanologist Eduardo Laguarda said yesterday that based on the past 16 days' activity of Mt. Mayon, the possibility of a powerful "1814 plinian-type" eruption is no longer very high.

A plinian-type of eruption is the most powerful eruption possible and involves the explosive ejection of relatively viscous lava. It can send ash and volcanic gas tens of kilometers into the air.

NEARBY: A1

2 Navy officers killed in clash with Moro rebels

By Joseph R. Uy

TWO NAVY OFFICERS WERE KILLED on Tuesday night during a raid by Navy commandos on a coastal stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf Islamic group in Basilan while in pursuit of prisoners who escaped from the provincial jail there three weeks ago.

Military spokesperson Lt. Col. Romeo Alvarado Jr. identified the fallen.

2 NAVY: A1

Asean, China open world's biggest free trade area on Jan. 1

JAKARTA—CHINA AND SOUTHEAST Asia will establish the world's biggest free trade area (FTA) on Friday—Jan. 1, 2010—embracing billions of dollars in goods and investments covering a market of 1.7 billion consumers.

Eight years in the making, the Asian-Chinese FTA will rival the Euro-

pean Union and the North American Free Trade Area in terms of value and surpass these markets in terms of population.

Officials hope it will expand Asia's trade reach while boosting international trade that has already been expanding at 20 percent a year.

"In 2010 we are sending a strong signal that Asian is open," Secretary Palapattaran, of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), told AFP.

China has just overtaken the United States to become Asian's third largest trading partner, and will help over-

haul Japan and the EU to become "number one" within the first five years of the FTA, said Palapattaran, deputy secretary general for the Asian Economic Community.

Under the agreement, China and the six founding Asian countries—Brunei, ASEAN: A1

RP ships average age: 34 yrs

By Kristine L. Alano

ALL OF THE COUNTRY'S ABOUT 200 passenger and cargo boats are almost 30 years old and should have been replaced a long time ago or sent to the scrap yard, according to maritime officials.

"All of them are aging," said Trans-

portation Undersecretary Thompson Santos.

He said the average age of inter-island passenger ships in the country is 34 years. In many countries, this is considered too old to be seaworthy.

He noted that in Japan, boats that have reached 30 years of age were

UP TO A1

Move over Quirino, here comes Rizal, the monument



By Leoncio Balbin Jr.
and Vincent Cabrera
Reporter Northern Luzon

VIGAN CITY—NO "PORKY" MONUMENT to Dr. Jose Rizal available? No problem, one will be raised in

President Macapagal-Arroyo led the Rizal Day celebrations here yesterday with a borrowed statue of the national hero taking pride of place at Plaza Calabran.

The statue was taken from the Zamboanga City Rizal Monument.



LIFE IS A BREEZE IN TAGAYTAY.



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INQUIRER Southern Luzon

A love affair with Vietnamese noodles

By Marissa C. Soliman
Metro-Pasig City

IT IS ONLY IN PASIG where a bowl of Vietnamese rice noodles is freshly called "chowking."

The word, not slightly sweetened noodle soup—rich chicken, beef or pork (baron) and garnish with mango-leaf sprouts and chili leaves—is actually called "pho bo," said Inquirer-Bureau Chief, Marissa C. Soliman.

"If you go to Vietnamese restaurants in Manila and order chowking noodles, they will probably say that you came from Pasig," he said. The original chowking is not porridge as in Vietnam ("chow" means rice and "king" means old dish of food).

Refugees

Asian, who requested not to give his last name, co-manages Vietnam Village, a 13-hectare bar about 12 kilometers from the city proper of Metro-Pasig in Pasig. The area was donated by the city government to house the 2,000 Vietnamese refugees or "boat people," including families, who escaped communist rule in their country in 1975.

Vietnam Village is being supported by the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines and has become one of the city's tourist attractions.

The Vietnamese families stayed there until the United States granted them asylum in 1980. Today only about five families have remained.

According to Asian, Vietnam Village was the second refugee camp in Pasig after the one near the city airport, which later got burned down. "That camp also used to be open to the public. Vietnamese could come in and try the Vietnamese food," he remembered. Asian recalls the story of how the



A BOWL of Vietnamese rice noodles at a Pasig restaurant. The dish is locally called "chowking" in the province, which had hosted Vietnamese refugees camp.

Vietnamese noodle soup came to be strongly known as chowking in Pasig.

A Filipino who came to the camp and turned the original chowking porridge into what others call chowking, he said when the others came, they were less-than-served the noodles.

"The people just thought it was the chowking the first guy was telling them about," Asian said.

Marksmen

Since the '80s, the refugees have lived among the Filipino community and established noodle houses and other businesses in the city.

"That's probably how Filipinos started preparing the pho bo," Asian said.

But he pointed out a "secret" to the style of cooking that makes a pho bo prepared by a Vietnamese different



TWO VARIETIES of Pasig's Vietnamese rice noodles are served at this restaurant together with bread.

from those of Filipinos.

Asian said the rice noodles were traditionally prepared by first soaking the rice to swell for two days. It is then finely rolled and drained in a rice-processor water.

The rolled rice is steamed and finally sliced into strips.

"Sometimes we'll use fresh rice, but it's not as good as the rice that's been soaked for two days," Asian said.

Asian pointed out "chowking" is a rice noodle house that opened all over the city and have become almost an equivalent to the "grubbin'" and "mommy" (mommy and noodle house) in Manila.

Asian said he would like to see the chowking be a kind of the rice noodle or pho bo (rice noodle) house.

At Vietnam Village, the rice noodles are supplied to restaurants and hotels at P200 per kilo, while they are

only bought for P90 to P100 per kilo at the city market. "It is cheaper probably because of the way they (vendors) are made," Asian said.

Although he acknowledged that chowking is not as healthy as pho, he said it is also delicious. "Well, only a few people could say it is prepared the right way," he said.

Attraction

Filipino-Vietnamese Barbecue, 22, who runs a noodle house in the city for over 30 years, said his place also served other Vietnamese dishes, but the rice noodles was one of the specialties.

When guests ask for chowking, they are actually looking for pho bo, he said.

Pho (Pho, 22), who runs chowking in Pasig, said he grew up knowing the rice noodles as chowking.

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HEALTH ADVISORY

Kalusugan sa Kapaskuhan



Mga Paalalang pangkalusugan ngayong kapaskuhan:

1. Plansuhin ang inyong mga gagawin ngayong panahon ng pasko upang malutasan ang pagmamadali at tansyon.
2. Ingatan ang sarili at pamilya sa pagbago-bagong klima at sa pagkatuyo ng pawis sa katawan. Ito ay maaaring maging sanhi ng ubo, sipon at lagnat. Kung may lagnat na ng dalawang (2) araw, komunsulta sa pinaka-malapit na health center.
3. Maghanda ng masustansiyong pagkain sa Noche Buena at Media Noche. Siguraduhing may kasamang gulay at prutas ang hamon at keso de bola sa hapag-kainan.
4. Pag-ingatan ang inyong puso. Kumain ng sapat lang para matugunan ang pang-araw-araw na gawain.
5. Uminom ng maraming tubig at mga juice para gumaan ang pakikiamin.
6. Matulog ng sapat upang makapagpahinga ang katawan at isipan.
7. Iwasan ang mga mataong lugar dahil ang mga bakteriyang sanhi ng sakit ay mabilis dumami at kumalat sa mga ganitong lugar.
8. Gumamit ng mga palamuting environment-friendly, at hindi fire hazard. Itago ang mga ito sa hang ligtas na lugar para magamit sa susunod na taon.
9. Bumili ng mga laruang walang matulis o mutalis na bahagi o kanyit malikot na laruang maaaring makabara sa salamunan.
10. Huwag gumamit ng paputok. Mag-ingay sa pamamagitan ng ligtas at panibagong pamamaraan. Salubungin ang Bagong Taon ng buhay at buo ang sarili at pamilya.



Marissa C. Soliman
Bureau Chief
LABANAN
ANG
KAHIRAPAN

Maligayang Pasko at
Malusog na Bagong Taon!



Francisco T. Duque II
Secretary of Health

'Lightning' Bolt holds sporting world in awe

LONDON—AGED 21, THE SOARING 210 pounds and twenty pounds of muscle are the first decade of the new millennium. That's what the world's sports spectators and media are saying.

A rise of talented young talent is being seen in the sport of basketball. The first decade of the new millennium is being seen in the sport of basketball. The first decade of the new millennium is being seen in the sport of basketball.

The wonder was provided on just the first day by the manner in which the new era was seen. But, this made a mark on the previous world and the future of the sport of basketball. Despite the new era and the future of the sport of basketball, the new era and the future of the sport of basketball.

He set another world record in the 200 Bolt, this time breaking Michael Johnson's

1996 world 100-meter record (last posted on world list for 25 years, and added a third when the Jamaican won the 100-meter).

This time, again without apparent effort, Bolt won himself another 100-meter world record in the 100 and again broke the 200-meter world record.

Bolt on the track, Michael Phelps in the pool and Yelena Isinbayeva in the vault showed that the most elemental Olympic sports can be the most satisfying. Phelps won a record eight gold medals in swimming, while Isinbayeva won her own record's pole vault record in 10.20 meters, the 200-meter world record.

Just as Bolt's extraordinary feat was the end of the decade's highlight, it was the beginning of the new era.

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BOLT shows stride.

A happy sporting New Year

THE PRACTICE AT THIS TIME IS TO ensure the year that you intend and can see with hope for the future. It is in your world, it is the time in which you can accomplish break-down on the things and the things that you want to improve.

We have a whole new year to do this. Some additional change in the things you want to do is what you want to do. It is in your world, it is the time in which you can accomplish break-down on the things and the things that you want to improve.

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Cavs clip Hawks anew



CLEVELAND's LeBron James stars for Cavs.

NY Knicks turn back Pistons; Kobe, Lakers whip Warriors

STUTTGART—THE CLEVELAND CAVALIERS won a third straight game and a fourth quarter blow to beat the Atlanta Hawks 94-84 on Tuesday night.

The Cavaliers won 20 points and LeBron James had 18 points and eight rebounds for the Cavaliers, who won 10 consecutive games.

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place. Officially, the Cavs are now 10-10.

In Atlanta, the Hawks, David Lee had a season-high 30 points and 12 rebounds in New York's 101-94 victory over the Hawks.

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Rockets eyeing McGrady trade

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PBA reaches out to young hoop fans

PHILADELPHIA—THE PBA is reaching out to young hoop fans.

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Williams, Santos lead BPC contenders

SEATTLE—RACE STANDING: THE BPC is leading the race.

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PARA SA 'YO... BAHAY



By the end of 2009, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC), led by Vice President Noli De Rosales, continued its commitment to providing housing for the poor. HUDCC's efforts were aimed at ensuring that the housing sector remains a priority in the government's development agenda.

Completion of the National and the National Housing Finance Institutions (NHFI) - Housing 100,000 families from Malabon, Marikina, and Marikina, Laguna, is a big step for the re-establishment of HUDCC's government in the Luzon-Mindanao Region, a vital component of the economic development program for the area.

This is the single largest allocation program ever undertaken by the Philippine government, and it is a testament to the government's commitment to providing housing for the poor.

Affordable Homes, Sustainable Financing

The year 2009 also saw a shift in the government's approach to housing. The government's focus was on providing affordable housing for the poor, while also ensuring that the housing sector remains a priority in the government's development agenda.

At the end of 2009, the HUDCC had already received about P60.7 billion in total cost financing program, providing funding for 17,000 housing units - nearly doubling its 2008 total take-outs for 2009.

The year 2009 also saw a major development that will ensure affordable and sustainable housing for the poor. This was the creation of the HUDCC's Housing Development Fund (HDF) in 2009 on July 21, which strengthens the HUDCC's role in providing housing for the poor, while also ensuring that the housing sector remains a priority in the government's development agenda.

This is also the year that the National Housing Finance Institutions (NHFI) - Housing 100,000 families from Malabon, Marikina, and Marikina, Laguna, is a big step for the re-establishment of HUDCC's government in the Luzon-Mindanao Region, a vital component of the economic development program for the area.

The government's commitment to providing housing for the poor is a testament to the government's commitment to providing housing for the poor. The government's focus was on providing affordable housing for the poor, while also ensuring that the housing sector remains a priority in the government's development agenda.

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Secure Shelter for the Poor

Sustained efforts by the government to provide secure housing for the poor is a testament to the government's commitment to providing housing for the poor. The government's focus was on providing affordable housing for the poor, while also ensuring that the housing sector remains a priority in the government's development agenda.

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services provided from these programs.

Responding to Crisis

To help alleviate the impact of the global financial crisis, the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council (HUDCC) has been providing financial assistance to the poor. The HUDCC's efforts were aimed at ensuring that the housing sector remains a priority in the government's development agenda.

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From Shaking to Shaking Response

In the aftermath of the typhoon that hit the country during the end of the year, the National Government immediately responded to the needs of the affected people. The HUDCC's efforts were aimed at ensuring that the housing sector remains a priority in the government's development agenda.

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near monthly announcements. About 6,000 temporary homes were created for the homeless, amounting to about P60.4 billion in financial assistance in housing for the homeless.

This, while the year 2009 may mark the completion of the most important government program - the creation of the HUDCC's Housing Development Fund (HDF) in 2009 on July 21, which strengthens the HUDCC's role in providing housing for the poor, while also ensuring that the housing sector remains a priority in the government's development agenda.

2009 Accomplishments of a Glance

- Completed the relocation of 15,747 families in 10 of November in the city of Manila to new sites under the National Urban Shelter Improvement Program (NUSIP).
- Relocated around 4,000 families who lost their homes during typhoon Ondoy for new and existing resettlement sites in just one month.
- Provided immediate assistance worth P1.7 billion in Housing Loans and P1.1 billion in Home Repair and Rehabilitation Grants to typhoon victims.
- Benefited 1,570 housing loan borrowers affected by the typhoon through a three-month moratorium on amortization payments.
- Released P11 billion from January to November under the NUSIP and more financing which covers 17,000 housing units.
- Granted to new housing loans to 4,000 families from January to December 2009 through P4.1 billion worth of loans under the Community Mortgage Program.
- Provided assistance to 1,017 poor families through the National Housing Authority's programs such as rent housing, medium-term housing, community-based housing assistance, slum upgrading, and urban services development, and regularization of tenancy rights.
- Provided relief to 40,000 homeless through the Socialized and Low-Cost Housing Loan Restructuring and Consolidation Program, with initial estimated conditional payments and amortizations of P1.1 billion from March to November 2009.
- Granted 1,570 beneficiaries through rental and development programs for loan amounts totaling P1.1 billion.
- Allocated P11 billion for housing and short-term loans as part of the government's economic stimulus package in response to the global financial crisis.
- Generated about 40,000 jobs through the development of land and construction of 1,000 housing units.
- Donated 10,000 to help for residential projects covering 100,000 housing units.



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Mini shabu lab raided in Pasig City



GRACEY MICHANCIKE

A Quezon City policeman checks part of a stack of deadly firecrackers popularly known as "aron" (pyramid) confiscated as a suspect near the PLEX Ballroom Exit in Quezon City. The sale of "aron-aron" firecrackers to welcome the new year has been prohibited by authorities.

By Tina G. Santos

A MINI SHABU LABORATORY WAS RAIDED IN Pasig City Tuesday night by agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) who found a self-underestimated amount of illegal drugs inside the abandoned unit.

Armed with a search warrant, Bureau agents descended down on a deserted unit on the 24th floor of Skyway Tower Towers in Taguig City.

Towers

According to Bureau Valley, executive office of the National Capital Region, they had information that the unit was occupied by three Chinese nationals who reportedly left the place sometime last month.

"Apparently, the three had a fight and they threatened to report on one another. Perhaps out of fear, they literally left the place while they were still processing drugs," Valley said.

Ministry

Asked if the Chinese suspects were members of an international drug syndicate, the NBI official said they were still checking the identities of the suspects with the International Police Organization.

"But it's also possible that the three were using different names," Valdez said.

A contact Valdez to signed the condominium unit's lease contract, the NBI official added. The suspects had moved into the unit last June, he said.

Drugs

During the raid, the NBI agents also found three identification cards bearing the names

Willy Chua, William So and Lyn Xia.

Food smell

Once in the unit, Valdez said they received information from the condominium security officers regarding a food smell coming from the abandoned unit.

When the security guards checked, they found several processors, essential chemicals and laboratory equipment used in the manufacture of dangerous drugs, prompting them to report the discovery to the NBI.

Residues

"We found epinephrine, not phenylephrine which is also being used as a precursor in methamphetamine," he said.

"There were also residues of drugs," he added.

The NBI official said they even had to use tear gas and gas masks during the raid because of the offensive attack coming from the different chemicals that were left as there were no long processed in laboratory.

Follow-up

He said that NBI chemists have yet to determine the amount of illegal drugs seized during the raid.

Valdez added that they were still conducting follow-up operations that would lead to the arrest of the operators of the shabu laboratory.

A 'simple' New Year welcome

By Hilda Colunga

A MILDLY YEAHED CELEBRATION, this time.

Unlike the vibrant City government, which earlier decided to cancel its New Year wave parties, the city of Taguig will push through the traditional yearend countdown and welcome 2013 like the rest of the world.

However, the festivities will be kept simple and inexpensive in the light of the recent volcanic dust that hit the country. Mayor Freddie Yaga said yesterday.

In the first five minutes of 2013, fireworks will light up the sky at Block 37, the favorite site of many concerts in that locale.

Enzo, Kennedy Embassy Bar, will sponsor the fireworks display to be provided by Dragon Fireworks Inc. while the restaurant Thank God It's Friday will hold a street party at Bonifacio High Street after the countdown.

"The city government has also temporarily lifted the curfew on business establishments as residents and visitors can celebrate all night long during the New Year."

Suspect in barangay chair slay nabbed

By Tina G. Santos

ONE OF THREE SUSPECTS WHO ALLEGEDLY KILLED a barangay chair in Manila Tuesday was arrested by authorities during a follow-up operation in Nauglag, Marikina City.

Chief Insp. Erwin Magarino, head of the Manila Police District homicide section, identified the second suspect as Mark Joseph Espinosa, 19, alias "Mia-Mia," of Marikina City.

Magarino said Espinosa was tagged as one of the three suspects in the killing of Reynaldo Arantes, 55, chair of Barangay 105, Zone 13, and a resident of Marikina Street, Nauglag, last midnight.

Police are now conducting follow-up operations to arrest Espinosa's alleged cohorts identified as Leonard Espinosa, alias "Yagot," and Bryan Ladia, alias "Boris," both 19 years old.

Magarino said Espinosa was nabbed around 5 p.m. Tuesday at a friend's house

Last year, Taguig City threw a grand party with a world-class fireworks display similar to popular celebrations in other big cities.

But because many Taguig residents were still reeling from the devastation wrought by Tropical Storm "Ondoy" (Typhoon) that hit the city, the celebration was postponed.

The mayor added that despite the wide the country-wide Taguig—last year's celebration in 2010, he remained optimistic that 2013 would be a fruitful one for the city.

Agents from street parties, the city government has already said down preparations for its Open House program adoption for a new fireworks-related injuries and fatalities.

Taguig said a city-wide information drive has been launched to warn the public against the use of fireworks and the indiscriminate firing of guns to celebrate the New Year.

"I also should also note that, welcoming the New Year, and at the same, recognizing a peaceful and safe observance of the occasion," he said.

In Marikina Subcity, Espinosa, who the number revealed his whereabouts to authorities.

At the MPD detention cell, Espinosa denied involvement in the crime, saying it was the two other suspects who killed the victim.

While he admitted that Espinosa and Ladia were his friends and that they had a drinking session before the incident, Espinosa insisted that he was not involved in the killing.

It was learned that several months ago, Arantes and his men arrested Ladia and Espinosa for allegedly attacking a barangay councilman.

The men are reportedly members of a street gang notorious for creating trouble in Marikina's area of jurisdiction.

There were reports that the suspects would be get back at Arantes, police said.

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The World

US intelligence had info ahead of airliner attack

Editor Lawrence B. Gossio

Yemen investigates Nigerian's contacts inside the al-Qaida

SANA—OFFICIALS IN YEMEN were investigating Tuesday whether the Nigerian suspected in the attempted Christmas Day attack on a US airliner spent time with al-Qaida affiliates in the country in the months leading up to the botched bombing.

Authorities, warblers and other officials at the Iran's Ministry for the Islamic Language, where Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab had studied to study Arabic, said the Associated Press that he attended school for only the month of March, which began in late August. That has raised questions about whether he had any contact with al-Qaida operatives in Yemen, a law enforcement official said.

Abdulmutallab, 23, told US officials after his arrest by a retired training and instruction from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen, a law enforcement official said.

According to Yemeni officials, Abdulmutallab spent months in a training camp in Yemen, which he had visited in the past.

The possibility that he was involved with militants in Yemen has been widely reported, though he had spent most of his time in Saudi Arabia and Yemen, according to a spokesman for the Saudi government.

Abdulmutallab is believed to have been in Saudi Arabia for some time before the attack.

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HONOLULU—US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA said Tuesday that the intelligence community had bits of information that should have been pieced together that would have triggered "red flags" and possibly prevented the Christmas Day attempted terrorist attack on a Detroit-bound airliner.

"There was a mix of human and systemic failures that contributed to this potential catastrophic failure of security," Obama said.

Obama said officials at the Associated Press that he attended school for only the month of March, which began in late August. That has raised questions about whether he had any contact with al-Qaida operatives in Yemen, a law enforcement official said.

"We didn't get any notice from the Americans to get this on a list," al-Laybi said, "because they had not told them about this man."

al-Laybi said Abdulmutallab received a letter from a man in Saudi Arabia who said he was a member of al-Qaida, which he had visited in the past.

"Our investigations are looking into when he got the letter and whether he was in contact with anyone who was in contact with him," al-Laybi said.

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compounded by a e-mail with Maj. David Walsh's name, who is charged with killing 11 people on Fort Hood, Texas, on Nov. 5.

"Had this critical information been shared, it could have been compared with other intelligence, and a false, clever picture of the suspect would have emerged," Obama said in a brief statement in the media.

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Iran seeks to smuggle uranium 23 killed in 2 Iraq bombings

VIENNA—IRAN IS TRYING to smuggle uranium to build nuclear weapons, according to a report by the Associated Press.

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as he knew, some of the US's sensitive nuclear data about the countries about any such allegations.

"We don't have any official information yet regarding this use of exchange between the two countries," he said.

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ANTI-THAI HONGING refugees are in a police truck during the operation to deport thousands of migrants in Laos near the Thai border.

Thailand reports 4,000 Hmong to Laos

RETHAUN—THAI THROUS have completed the repatriation of more than 4,000 Hmong to Laos, according to a report by the Associated Press.

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Orwell's birthplace in India up for renovation

DELHI, INDIA—AFTER BEING neglected and forgotten for decades, the birthplace of George Orwell, the author of "1984" and "Animal Farm," is finally set for a makeover.

Orwell was born in 1903 in Motihari, a village in the Indian state of Bihar, near the border with Nepal.

The house, which was built in 1903, is now in a state of disrepair and is being renovated.

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A SIGNPOST announces the birthplace of British author George Orwell in Bihar's village of Motihari, a village near the border with Nepal.

the province to declare it a national site in early 2003, he said.

Orwell said in his book "1984" that he was born in Motihari, a village in Bihar, India.

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■ **RP expects \$200-M ADB**
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■ **FMIC leads mutual**
fund pack with 50%
yield in 2009 /B2

BIR sees losses of up to P7B in 1st quarter

By Rowell M. Domingo

THE EFFECTS OF DEVASTATING STORMS on the country's economy continued to reflect on the tax take of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, which reported that it expected to lose some P7.2 billion in collections in the first quarter of 2010.

Bureau Commissioner Joel L. Tan foresaw this private final "taxi to hell" — as property damaged and income lost due to the storm — reportedly reached about P16 billion.

"These numbers are preliminary and the BIR has to watch the chain to see for the deadline of filing an

Storms continue to exact heavy toll on agency's tax take

April 10, the revenue chief said.

For 2009, the BIR's target goal is to collect P500 billion. That would mean losses due to the storm would amount to the same 0.73 percent of the target.

But according to Tan Torres, there is some optimism among the government's economic managers that the 2009 goals must be lowered to somewhere in the range of P480 billion and P500 billion.

The revenue chief explained that the lower collection target would also be due to the government's decision to reduce macroeconomic anticipation, as well as the existing tax perks granted by the Board of Investments and the Philippine Economic Zone Authority.

In earlier interviews, Tan Torres had admitted that the BIR would fail to meet its P500-billion target collection for the year.

He said the agency should be able to make up for its missed targets in January, when the BIR starts the year with a clean slate.

In line with efforts to whip the BIR into better shape, Tan Torres also announced a nationwide reorganization of the agency — a move that could initially affect at least a hundred revenue district officers and assistant PEOs.

Those affected will be moved to new geographic areas of responsibility but they may retain their ranks and duties.

Also, the BIR chief said, SOCs had been delegated to "serve people

second." This order will affect those with the rank of Revenue Officer 2 and lower.

The BIR will also begin checking those who have claimed losses — whether they have already occurred from insurers, Tan Torres said.

"If they have collected, that must be deducted from the amount of loss they are claiming for tax purposes," he said.

According to the Philippine Insurance and Reinsurance Association (PIRA), insurers claim on property damaged due to the onslaught of Typhoon "Ondoy" alone ran up to P11 billion.

PRA officials said the amount of losses was huge because the areas most affected by floods were industrial

and commercial, rather than agricultural or residential districts.

Based on government estimates, damage from the combined effects of Ondoy and Tropical Depression "Peppy" amounted to some P38 billion.

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YEAREND REPORT

DA weathers stormy, critical events of '09

By Rex T. Ochoyos

HAVING A ROSE CONFERENCE in October, Agriculture Secretary Arthur T. Uy, actually highlighted an issue concerning rice prices and imports, a point delegates with a warning that a "perfect storm" of price factors was brewing and could trigger a crisis of the 2010 rice crisis.

Already, Uy said, more clouds could be seen on the horizon.

The devastating Tropical Storm "Ondoy" spun from regional monsoon rains, hit the country's main rice producing areas just as farmers were about to take place.

An equivalent of \$63,000 tons of white rice, based on price (not damage) were wiped out. This figure does not include mobile damage in commercial areas and households, and Bureau of Internal Revenue, National Food Authority, and other agencies.

Oil prices, which affect the

cost of farm inputs like fertilizer, at that time rose 20 percent year to date to \$70 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

In the same conference, Bob Prosser, a US-based trader who correctly predicted in 2007 that rice would be \$1,000 a ton, appeared to be less excited.

Prosser, a director at Seneca Commodity Trading LLC, explained that the global grain trade had reached a "tipping point" in the middle of 2008, and governments could no longer say "there is no demand."

He said the rice market in 2009 did not seem to be in the grip of the same panic as in 2008.

"Even governments may have learned their lesson from 2008, which was, don't panic," he quipped.

Rapine and demand in 2009 would push prices up, yes, but perhaps not as sharply as in 2008.

In 2009, Prosser predicted we run with depression, but

PPA pushes for review of Charter restrictions

By Paolo S. Montecillo

THE PHILIPPINE PORTS AUTHORITY (PPA) is pushing for the review of a constitutional provision that prohibits foreigners from gaining control of local shipping lines.

The law is blocking the entry of new investments, which can create more jobs, in the country's aging shipping sector, said Carlos Sevilla, PPA general manager.

Under the Constitution, all transportation companies in the Philippines must be at least 60 percent owned by Filipinos.

This limits the alternative ownership of 40 foreign entities to 40 percent, which means these companies may never officially gain control of local lines.

The same rule applies to public utilities like telecommunications and energy generation and distribution.

Media critics such as newspapers, radio and television and other types are also covered by the rule. The provision is supposed to ensure that vital sectors of the economy and society will remain in the hands of Filipinos.

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BUSINESS

Trade missions, business matching events lined up for 2010

By Miguel L. Lito

TO HELP EXPORTERS find and, eventually, recover from the market slump, the Bureau of Export Trade Promotion, an attached agency of the Department of Trade and Industry, has lined up business missions and opportunity matching activities for 2010.

According to the BTEP's calendar of activities for 2010, 23 country-based business missions (CBMs) to different countries and sectors will be conducted.

CBMs are "tailor-made" programs that export firms use to increase sales and to expand into new markets. The program is organized by country, with the most important markets being the United States, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Canada, India, China, and the European Union.

The BTEP also has lined up 10 trade missions to different countries and sectors. These include the United States, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Canada, India, China, and the European Union.

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RP expects \$200-M ADB fund for energy plan

By Amy B. Ramos

THE GOVERNMENT OF RENEWABLE ENERGY AND THE ADB are preparing a \$200-million fund to support the long-term energy efficiency and renewable energy investment program of the country.

According to the DOE, the fund is intended to support the long-term energy efficiency and renewable energy investment program of the country.

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Solid strategy not needed for a profitable 2010

MARKET RIDE

JOHN SANCHEZ

It's not the middle of the year, but another opportunity to make a profit on Jan. 23, 2010. However, this time around the market has rebounded to \$15.85, prices are not as good as \$2.25.

This is followed by another market rally that was fueled by "better-than-expected" analysis on the economic recovery of the US economy, as our market reached \$15.85. It remained another day, equivalent to \$2.46, which is a substantial gain.

Withholding potential risk again that should not be overlooked on the US economy and its recovery status, our market continued to climb by another \$2.33 to \$15.85. It reached the peak for the year of \$15.85 on Dec. 2, 2009.

After then, the market has been making gains in a more price-based bid in what looked like another market consolidation.

Bottom line again

Based on the market's behavior in the last two years, as well as the expected impact of a potential recovery, it is very likely that our market will continue to trend upward.

The investment potential and interest in the market is still strong as of Dec. 2, 2009. It is a good sign that the market is still strong and that the market is still strong.

The market is still strong and that the market is still strong.

3 New Year's wishes for farmers, fisherfolk

GUYOTO'S
HUNT IS ON!
THE HUNT IS ON!

By Ernesto M. Girones

IN FORMALIZING THE THREE most important New Year's wishes for farmers and fisherfolk, we must not forget the importance of the New Year's wishes for farmers and fisherfolk.

The New Year's wishes for farmers and fisherfolk are:

1. **Direction** - In this time, the government should provide a clear direction for the future of the country.
2. **Commentary** - The government should provide a commentary on the current state of the country.
3. **Accountability** - The government should be accountable for its actions.

CICC wants rules on digital TV out by May

By Paul C. Hernandez

THE COMMISSION ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (CICT) is working to come up with the guidelines to govern the rollout of digital television in the country before the current administration ends its term.

The agency said it was still waiting for the private sector to come up with a plan for the rollout of digital TV.

The Philippines is still in the early stages of the rollout of digital TV.

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From
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Enduring
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in Ice' treat for storm victims.



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REQUIREMENTS FOR ONE YEAR RESIDENCE



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JUNE 2004



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